



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Edinburgh Research Explorer

### Language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation

**Citation for published version:**

Gafaranga, J 2012, 'Language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation', *International Journal of Bilingualism*, vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 501-527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006911429520>

**Digital Object Identifier (DOI):**

[10.1177/1367006911429520](https://doi.org/10.1177/1367006911429520)

**Link:**

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

**Document Version:**

Peer reviewed version

**Published In:**

International Journal of Bilingualism

**Publisher Rights Statement:**

© Gafaranga, J. (2012). Language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation. International Journal of Bilingualism, 16(4), 501-527. 10.1177/1367006911429520

**General rights**

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

**Take down policy**

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact [openaccess@ed.ac.uk](mailto:openaccess@ed.ac.uk) providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.



# LANGUAGE ALTERNATION AND CONVERSATIONAL REPAIR IN BILINGUAL CONVERSATION

Joseph Gafaranga  
School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Science  
The University of Edinburgh  
[josephg@ling.ed.ac.uk](mailto:josephg@ling.ed.ac.uk)

## **Abstract**

Researchers have consistently reported language alternation in repair sequences in bilingual conversation. However, up until now, no systematic account of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair has been put forward. The aim of this paper is to fill this gap. Two main questions are addressed: (a) where in the repair sequence can language alternation occur? and (b) what does language alternation do in repair sequences when it occurs? Two main theoretical ideas are drawn upon in addressing these research questions, namely the fact that “nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class ‘repairable’” (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977: 363) and the fact that language choice itself is a “significant aspect of talk organisation” (Gafaranga, 1999). Applying these ideas, the paper shows that language alternation can occur at in point in the repair sequence. As for the functionality of language alternation, the paper shows that, among bilingual speakers, repair may be addressed to language choice itself. Alternatively, language alternation may be used as an additional resource in the organisation of repair.

**Key words:** Bilingual conversation, language alternation, conversational repair, medium, medium repair, other-language repair.

## **I. Introduction**

Researchers have consistently reported *language alternation in repair sequences in bilingual conversation* (Gumperz (1982), Auer (1984a), Wei (1994), Alfonzetti (1998), Shin and Mirloy (2000), Gafaranga (2000), Ihemere (2007), etc.) Yet, despite these ‘noticings’, no systematic account of repair in bilingual conversation has yet been proposed. We still do not know exactly where in the repair sequence language alternation may occur and very little is known about what language alternation does in repair sequences when it occurs. Without such a systematic account, which could be used as a point of reference, it becomes difficult to say for certain whether the various authors, when they mention language

alternation in relation with conversational repair, actually refer to the same thing. The aim of this paper is to develop a systematic description of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation and, by so doing, fill this research gap. The two specific questions that I will seek to answer are: (a) where in the repair sequence can language alternation occur? and (b) what does language alternation do when it occurs in repair sequences?

In examining the above questions, I will draw on the now well-established literature on conversational repair (e.g. Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977, Schegloff, 2000, Jefferson, 1987, Drew, 1997, etc.). This literature has amply demonstrated, not just that conversational repair is highly structured, but also that, in conversation, participants use repair to accomplish a variety of “attendant interactional activities” (Jefferson, 1987: 88). It is precisely because conversational repair is a very productive interactional resource, because speakers use repair for a variety of purposes, that it has received the kind of research interest it has. Research has further shown that, in conversation, “nothing is, in principle, excludable from the class ‘repairable’” (Schegloff et al., 1977: 363). Following on and taking this finding seriously, I will also draw on the now established fact that “language choice is a significant aspect of talk organisation” (Gafaranga, 1999) and therefore that it too is not “excludable from the class ‘repairable’” (Schegloff et al., 1977: 363).

The following two examples can be looked at by way of an initial appreciation of the issues involved. As I have argued elsewhere, talk among adult bilingual Rwandans in Belgium normatively adopts Kinyarwanda-French language alternation (also referred to as *Kinyarwanda-for-all-practical-purposes*) as the *medium*

(Gafaranga, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2007). In the extract below, while using this *bilingual medium*, speaker A uses English and immediately realises its inappropriateness and proceeds to repair it using French. In this case, the switch from Kinyarwanda-French bilingual medium is officially oriented to as a problem to be repaired.

Extract 1<sup>i</sup>

1. D: Ufite **homework** – *devoir*  
'You have a homework – homework'
2. A: Ahaaa Ni ikibazo gikomeye  
'Ahaa It's a big problem'

Conversely, consider extract 2 below. Talk takes place in an Erasmus office at a university campus in Barcelona. The participants involved are a Catalan origin secretary (SEC), a student from Germany (STU) and a Catalan origin researcher (RES). In terms of *language preferences* (Auer (1984), Gafaranga (2001), Torras and Gafaranga (2002)), all three participants can speak English, SEC and RES share Catalan (and Spanish) and SEC can also speak French. In the conversation, English has been adopted as the medium.

Extract 2 (Gafaranga and Torras, 2001)

1. STU: I'm sorry it's not your fault right
  2. SEC: no [ uh no that's you – you- you-
  3. STU: [I'm erm I offended you
  4. SEC: mmm (.) **LE LE DROIT LE** (to RES) **el dret**
  5. RES: the right.
  6. SEC: the right (.) you have the right to protest eh OK
- 
4. SEC: mmm (.) the the right the (to RES) the right

In turns 2 and 4, SEC has a problem finding the word for what she wants to say and uses different strategies to initiate repair, namely repetition and cutoffs 'you-you-you', the word search marker 'mmm' and the pause (.) (Schegloff et al. 1977:

367). Failing to find the solution to her problem, she invites the support of co-participants in order to overcome the difficulty. But, as co-participants cannot read her mind (cannot tell which word she's missing), a practical problem (the reverse of what Sidnell (2010: 119) calls *the other-initiated repair problem*) of how to make it clear to them exactly what it is that she is having problems with arises. To solve this problem, she switches first to French (upper case) and then to Catalan (underlined). In this case, unlike in extract 1, language alternation itself is not the problem to be repaired. That is to say, the repairable problem did not arise because of language alternation. Rather language alternation is used as a resource to clarify exactly what the problem is. It occurs as part of the effort to repair the problem.

Briefly, in both examples above, language alternation occurs in repair sequences. However, it participates differently in the two sequences. In the first example, language alternation itself is the *trouble source* and, in the second, it contributes to *repair initiation*. It is clear then, based on these two examples, that, in bilingual conversation, the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair is not unidimensional. And following from this, an empirical issue is: in bilingual conversation, exactly how does language alternation interact with conversational repair? It is this empirical issue that this paper sets out to investigate, examining the specific research questions I have identified above.

This paper is organised in four main sections, in addition to the on-going introduction and a conclusion. Section three below highlights the centrality of language alternation in repair sequences in language alternation studies and, by so doing, foregrounds the need for a systematic investigation of the relationship between conversational repair and language alternation in bilingual conversation. The section

then comments in more detail on Gafaranga's work (2000, 2011) because the present paper builds on this previous work. Section four explores systematically the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation. In the section, it is shown that language alternation can occur at any point in the repair structure. Section five focuses on the specific issue of the status and function of language alternation in repair sequences in bilingual conversation. Two levels of signification are identified for language alternation in repair sequences. In some cases, language choice itself is the focus of repair and, in some other cases, it is only an additional resource that speakers draw on in organising their repair activities. The following is a brief account of the data I will draw on in these substantial sections of the paper.

## **II. Data and their context**

The data used in this paper come from a corpus of bilingual conversations audio-recorded in the Rwandan community in Belgium. This corpus consists of two data sets, one comprising interactions among adult bilingual Rwandans (see Gafaranga, 1998) and the other comprising adult-child conversations (Gafaranga, 2010, 2011).<sup>ii</sup> These two data sets are significantly different. In the first, there is a preference to adopt Kinyarwanda-French language alternation as the medium. In the second data set, on the other hand, there is no such preference. Rather participants frequently engage in *language / medium negotiation sequences* (Auer, 1984b, Gafaranga, 2007) which often, although not always, result in the adoption of a French monolingual medium (see for example Gafaranga, 2010). As Muysken (2000) and Auer (2000) say, two major types of language alternation can be observed across communities, namely alternational and insertional language alternation. Language alternation in the first data is mainly insertional while, in the second, it is mainly

alternational. This main corpus of data is complemented, for the purposes of illustrating general features of conversational repair, by data from a corpus of general practice consultations collected in the Midlands and South East of England (see Stevenson, Britten, Barber and Bradley, 2000)<sup>iii</sup>. Occasionally, extracts of talk from the literature will also be used.

### III. Conversational repair and language alternation in studies of bilingual conversation.

As I have indicated above, the aim of this section is to highlight the centrality of language alternation and conversational repair in language alternation studies. The territory of language alternation studies, as I have shown elsewhere (Gafaranga, 2007: 280), can be visualised as in table 1 below:

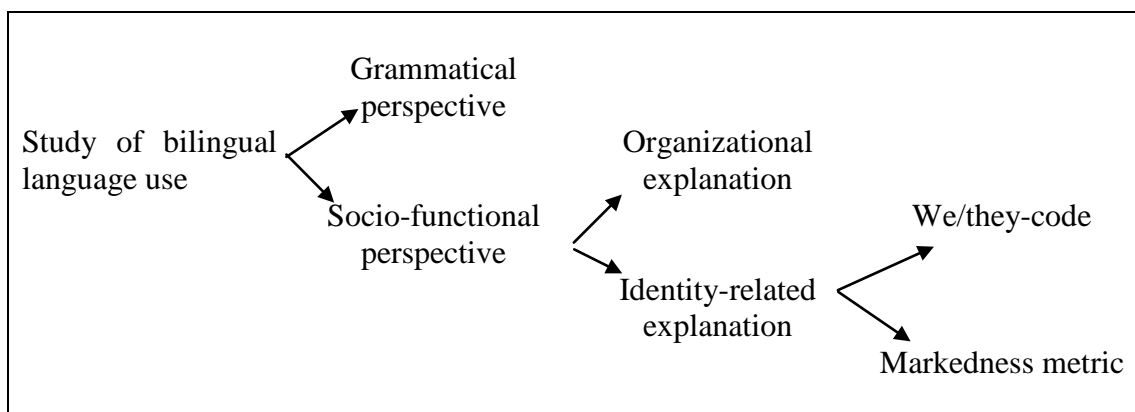


Table 1: Approaches to language alternation in bilingual conversation

The relationship between language alternation and conversational repair falls under the “organizational explanation”, an approach which was pioneered by Auer (1984a&b, 1988, 1995, 1998, etc.) (Also see Wei, 2005, Cashman, 2007 and Gafaranga 2009).

In fact, such a relationship between conversational repair and language alternation is already implied in Gumperz (1982). Indeed, describing what he sees as language alternation in reiterative structures, Gumperz writes:

“Frequently a message in one code is repeated in the other code, either literally or in somewhat modified form. In some cases such repetitions may serve to clarify what is said, but often they may amplify or emphasize a message.”  
(1982: 78) (

A dictionary definition of repair is that repair is “an **alteration** that is suggested or made by a speaker, the addressee, or audience in order to correct or clarify a previous conversational contribution.” (my emphasis)

([www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WahtIsARepair.htm](http://www.sil.org/linguistics/GlossaryOfLinguisticTerms/WahtIsARepair.htm)). However, conversation analysts concur that the notion of repair is broader than that of error correction. “Repair (...) is sometimes found where there is no hearable error, mistake or fault” (Schegloff et al, 1977: 363). According to Jefferson (1987), conversational repair can serve a variety of “attendant interactional activities”. For example, Egbert (1997) shows that, in multi-party conversation, repair initiation may be used to show affiliation while the response to repair initiation maybe used to negotiate change of the participation framework. In this sense, repair can be understood as an aspect of conversational organisation rather than as a functional category. Gumperz’s statement falls squarely within the remit of this broad view of conversational repair.

As I have indicated above, it is Auer’s work which has made it possible for researchers to begin to inspect data for instances of language alternation in repair sequences. According to Auer language alternation is either *participant-related* or it is *discourse-related*. By ‘discourse-relatedness’, Auer means the fact that language alternation can contribute to the organisation of the talk in which it occurs (1998: 4). By way of illustrating this general position that language alternation can serve a



discourse-related function, Auer (1984a) discusses language alternation in what he calls *second attempts*, namely “the repetition in the other language of a first pair part which was not responded to” (1998: 4). Following this initial observation, other researchers have inspected their data and reported cases of language alternation in repair sequences. The list below is by no means exhaustive.

The first group of reports, best exemplified by researchers such Alfonzetti (1998) and Shin and Milroy (2000), mention language alternation in repair sequences in the context of addressing general issues of language alternation in bilingual conversation. Alfonzetti (1998), in her study of ‘Italian-dialect code-switching in Sicily’, is interested in the issue of the directionality (or lack of it) of language alternation in bilingual conversation. This is the well-known question of whether language alternation serves the functions it does by virtue of it being directional or not, of whether language alternation has a *semantic value* (Gumperz, 1982, Blom and Gumperz, 1972). In this respect, Alfonzetti lists *self-repair* as one of the functions language alternation can serve without being directional. Likewise, Shin and Milroy (2000), in their study of “conversational code-switching among Korean-English bilingual children in New York”, are primarily interested in “how young Korean-English bilingual school children employ codeswitching to organise their conversation” (2000: 351). In this study, repair is reported to be one of the sites where language alternation plays a role.

The second group of researchers, who may globally be referred to as the ‘Newcastle Group’ because they were directly or indirectly related to Wei’s work at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, are mainly interested in language shift. They include, among others, Wei (1994), Wei, Milroy and Pong (1992), Milroy and Wei

(1995), Al-Yaqout (2010), Paraskeva (2010), Ihemere (2007), etc. All these researchers report language alternation in conversational repair sequences in the various communities they investigate and claim, more or less explicitly, that language alternation in repair sequences is a sign of language shift in progress. Related reports come from researchers working under the language socialisation framework (e.g. Paugh (2005), Bani-Shoraka (2009), Kulick (1992)). All these authors report conversational practices which amount to repair involving language alternation.

The third group of researchers I can mention here are interested in language alternation in repair sequences as a proof procedure. These include, in addition to Gafaranga (1998, 1999, 2000), Gafaranga and Torras (2001), Torras (1999), Bonacina and Gafaranga (2011), Bonacina (2011), etc. As we have seen above, investigations of language alternation in repair sequences became possible because of Auer's work, where it is claimed that language alternation has a discourse-related function. However, Auer's work has been criticised because of its assumption that talk among bilingual speakers is normatively conducted in one language (Gafaranga (1998, 1999) and Gafaranga and Torras (2001)). Auer (1984: 29-30) writes:

“In many bilingual communities, there is a *preference for same language talk*; code-switching (discourse- or participant-related) runs counter to this preference- which, of course, only heightens its signalling value- whereas transfer is neutral vis-à-vis questions of negotiating the language-of-interaction.” (my emphasis)

Gafaranga objects to this view that talk is necessarily conducted in one language, arguing instead that, among bilingual speakers, talk may also be normatively conducted in two or more languages. Thus, he speaks of a *monolingual medium* in the case talk is normatively conducted in one language and of a *bilingual medium* in the case talk is conducted in more than one language. In turn, this possibility of

conducting talk in two or more languages leads to a proof procedure problem. If two or more languages co-occur in the same conversation, how do we know whether we are dealing with a monolingual medium or with a bilingual medium? In the literature, this is known as the *base language / code issue* (Auer, 2000). In line with the CA proof procedure of *deviant cases analysis* (Heritage, 1988), Gafaranga argues that one way this issue can be solved is by observing language alternation in repair sequences. Thus, he speaks of *medium repair* and of *other-language repair* as possible ways of “telling the medium” (2000).

Briefly there is no shortage of interest among researchers in language alternation in repair sequences in bilingual conversation. What is missing is a general account of this conversational structure. Without this general account serving as a point of reference, it is not clear whether the various reports refer to the same animal and whether language alternation in repair sequences indistinctly serves all the functions. The two examples we have looked at in the introduction section indicate a degree of specialisation. Recent and not so recent work by Gafaranga points in the same direction. In his early work, as we have seen, Gafaranga made a distinction between two types of repair involving language alternation, namely *medium repair* and *other-language repair* (Gafaranga, 2000). Gafaranga used examples such as extract 2 as instances of medium repair, arguing that, in the instance, the switch to French and Catalan was never meant to stay. A similar example is extract 3 below. Talk takes place between two adult Rwandans. As expected (see above), Kinyarwanda-French language alternation is the medium. In the course of talking about the possibility for a refugee to study in UK universities, A encounters a difficulty (turn 3), switches to English (turn 3 & 5) and then attempts to translate the

English phrase into the medium they are using (turn 5). Noticing A's difficulties, B comes in and provides the repair (turn 6), translating the English phrase into French.

### Extract 3

1. A: noneho rero nka bariya b' impunzi ukuntu bigenda (.) babagira ba (.) a a amashuri hano ni *privé quoi* (.) ni *privé* mbega (.) kuburyo rero kugirango aze muri iyi *université* agomba kwishyura  
'refugees like him are (.) schools here are *private* (.) they are *private* so that he must pay to study at this *university*'
2. B: umh  
'umh'
3. A: *mais comme* nta mafaranga afite ay yatse *bourse le* (.) babyita **local government**  
'but as he doesn't have money he has had to apply for a *grant* from the (.) they call it **local government**'
4. B: umh  
'umh'
5. A: **local authority** *donc* ni nkaaa  
'**local authority** well it's likeee'
6. B: ni nka *municipalité*  
'it's like a *municipality*'
7. A: ni nka *municipalité c'est ça* (.) *municipalité* yahano niyo yamuhaye *bourse*  
'that's right it's like a *municipality* (.) he got a *grant* from the local *municipality*'

As for other-language repair, examples such as extract 4 below were used. In the extract, Kinyarwanda-French language alternation has been adopted as the medium. Participants are talking about a certain Commission (Urutonde) which had been set up back in Rwanda and charged with developing Kinyarwanda in the context of the language-in-education policy of 'Kinyarwandising' the education system. In the course of describing the kind of Kinyarwanda which was being developed, A runs into difficulty. At the point where this occurs, the speaker is orientated to Kinyarwanda as evidenced by the language of the search marker itself ('kitagize'). On noticing A's difficulty, other participants come to the rescue and provide the

missing word, but in French (turn 2 and turn 3). As the transcript shows, in this case, there is no effort whatsoever to translate, i.e. to repair, the proposed *mot juste*, even though a different language is used. Instead, the proposed *mot juste* is confirmed as appropriate in turn 4.

#### Extract 4

1. A: n'ibintu by mu Rutonde bavugango bakore ikinyarwandaaa (.)  
kitagize-  
'like the the commission of Rutonde who were developing  
Kinyarwandaaa (.) which was'-
2. B: [*pure*  
'*pure*']
3. C: [*pure*  
'*pure*']
4. A: umh ibyo narabirwayaga *dès le début*  
'I was against that *from the very beginning*'

Up to this point, three different ways in which language alternation relates to conversational repair have been identified, namely language alternation in the form of medium repair, language alternation in the form of other-language repair and a yet-to-be specified relationship as exemplified by extract 1 above. In fact, this relationship is clarified in Gafaranga's most recent work under the title of *transition space medium repair* (Gafaranga, 2011). According to Gafaranga (2011), two types of transition space medium repair can be observed. In the first type, illustrated by extract 1 above, an element within a *turn constructional unit* (TCU) (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1978) is repaired at the *transition relevance place* (TRP) (Sacks et al, 1978) using a different language. In the second type, at the TRP, the complete previous TCU is repaired, using a different language. An example of this second type of transition space medium repair can be found in extract 5 below. As the transcript shows, at the

TRP, a complete TCU in Kinyarwanda (*mwali nka bangahe?* – how many were you?)

is replaced by its equivalent in French (*vous étiez combien?*)

#### Extract 5

1. C :    **Yuu! Mwali nka bangahe? (.) Vous étiez combien à peu près?**  
              *(Estimations)?*  
              ‘Yuu ! How many were you roughly ? (.) How many were you  
              roughly ? (On average?)’
2. E:    *Toutes les filles ou tout le groupe?*  
              ‘All the girls or the whole group?’
3. C:    *Tout le- tout le groupe a dancé?*  
              ‘Did the- the whole group dance?’
4. E:    *Pas tout le- tout le groupe.*  
              ‘Not the- the whole group.’

In short, there is evidence that language alternation and conversational repair interact in very diverse ways and that mere mention of language alternation in repair sequences, as found in current literature, does not do justice to this diversity. In this respect, Gafaranga (2000) and Gafaranga (2011) represent a step forward in the sense that that diversity is clearly signalled. However, this step is still limited for at least two reasons. First of all the two contributions do not use the same criteria. While Gafaranga (2011) sees the placement of repair as an important dimension (Schegloff, 2000: 207), Gafaranga (2000) does not pay any particular attention to this dimension, this raising the issue of the consistency of the proposed categories. Is transition space medium repair a sub-category of medium repair? Based on the data we have looked at above, this is certainly not the case. That is to say, there is a need for a more systematic examination of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair. Secondly, placement of repair is not the only significant dimension in repair organisation. Other significant factors include who initiates repair, who effects it and the outcome of repair. Even in the case of placement, transition

space is not the only significant position for repair. Repair can also be placed within the same turn, in the turn immediately after the one containing the trouble source, in the third turn to the trouble source turn and it can be delayed until much later (Schegloff et al. 1977, Schegloff, 2000, Wong 2000). Therefore, a complete account of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair must take account of all the significant dimensions of repair organisation.

To summarise, conversational repair is felt to be central in the study of language alternation among bilingual speakers as evidenced by the number of scholars who have mentioned it, explicitly and less explicitly, in their projects. Yet no systematic account of the phenomenon is currently available. A possible explanation for this situation is that researchers had agenda other than describing the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair per se. For this reason, available reports of language alternation in repair sequences can be described as mere ‘noticings’ of the phenomenon. Gafaranga (2000 and 2011) is a significant, and yet still limited, step forward. In his work, Gafaranga signals that the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair might be a complex one, but he does not investigate that relationship per se either, this leading to a clear degree of inconstancy and incompleteness. In keeping with this previous work, in the sections below, a systematic investigation of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation is conducted. To recall, the sections will address two specific questions: (a) where in the repair sequence can language alternation occur and (b) what does language alternation do when it occurs in repair sequences. In section 4 below, I start with the first of these two questions.

#### **IV. Language alternation and the organisation of repair in bilingual conversation**

As I have indicated above, repair is best understood as an aspect of conversational organisation. Since conversational repair is one of the features of conversational organisation which have attracted ample research attention, reviews of the organisation of repair in conversation are readily available (e.g. Liddicoat (2007) and Sidnell (2010)) and I will spare the reader of yet another one. Rather, I will simply note that, maximally, a repair sequence comprises four components: *repairable* or *trouble source*, *repair initiator*, *repairer* and *ratification*. In examining the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair in bilingual conversation, I look at each of these components in turn.

##### *Language alternation and / in repairables*

Conversation is organised at many levels and, as a result, problems needing repair may arise at any one of them. According to Schegloff et al. (1977: 363) “nothing in the talk is, in principle, excludable from the class ‘repairable’”. In extract 6 below, for example, a lexico-grammatical problem arises. Participants are saying that the natives of the country where they live are racist (‘do not like foreigners’). Evidence of this racism is found in the question they typically ask any foreign student, namely whether he/she is studying in order to go back and work in his/her country of origin. A designs his turn such that an adjective is expected after the verb form ‘ari’ (are). That is, a subject + verb + complement (SVC) construction is projected. However, a problem arises as this adjective is not readily available to the speaker. Initially, A retraces himself while searching for the adjective. Failing to find it, he



abandons the search and the syntactic construction he had projected and adopts a subject + verb + object (SVO) construction.

#### Extract 6

A:       Ikikwereka ukunta ari ntuza- ari – badakunda abanyamahanga iwabo  
          (.) baraza bakakubaza (.) uri kwiga iki ah ngo *c'est pour aller*  
          *travailler dans ton pays* ((laughter))

-----

A:       What shows you that they are something- they are- they don't like  
          foreigners (.) they come and ask you (.) what are you studying *is it to*  
          *go and work in your country?* ((laughter))

In extract 7, on the other, a problem of hearing/understanding arises.

Participants are talking about a party to which E and other girl members of a dance group have participated. To the question of how many girls were involved, she answers that there were twenty five of them (turn 10). In turn 11, C uses an *open class repair initiator* (Drew, 1997, also see below) and E responds by restating the number 'twenty five' (12), thus confirming that she has understood C's 'umh?' as indicating lack of hearing.

#### Extract 7

1. C :   *Vous étiez combien à peu près? (Estimations) ?*  
          *'How many were you roughly ? (On average?)'*

(...)

10. E:   *Euh il y avait vingt cinq- je crois*  
          *'Euh there were twenty five – I think'*

11. C:   **umh?**

12. E:   *vingt cinq*  
          *'Twenty five'*

13. C:   *C'est beaucoup euh*  
          *'That's a lot'*

In extract 8, a problem arises at the level of what pragmaticists refer to as the *illocutionary force* (Searle, 1969) of what is said. Talk involves a health visitor (HV), a father (F) and a mother (M). A baby is feeding. The health visitor makes a comment to the effect that the baby is enjoying his food. The health visitor's statement is interpreted differently by the father and the mother. The father seems to have taken it to be indeed a plain statement and agrees with it. The mother, on the other hand, seems to have taken it to have the implication that the baby has not been fed (by her), finds this implication offensive (Heritage and Sefi, 1992: 367) and repairs it by way of challenging it.

Extract 8 (Heritage and Sefi, 1992)

1. HV: He's enjoying that [isn't he.
2. F: [Yes, he certainly is =
3. M: =He's not hungry 'cuz (h)he's just had 'iz bo:ttle.hhh

Also consider extract 9 below. In the conversation, participant A, a Rwandan priest living in Belgium, is saying that his parishioners trust him so much that they often come to tell him their personal problems. In turn 2, B uses a repair strategy (*exposed correction* (Jefferson (1987))) to formulate the *gist* (Heritage and Watson, 1979) of A's talk. Unlike in extract 8, here repair is used to communicate understanding and alignment between the participants.

Extract 9

1. A: (...) aho kugirango ajye kwa *Psy* atange igihumbi antumaho rero ni hahandi ni ukuvuga **akavuga**  
'Instead of going to the *Psy*(chiatrist) and pay one thousand (Belgian Francs) they send for me it the same it's to talk they talk (to me)
2. B: **akakubwira**  
'they tell you'
3. A: akambwira

‘they tell me’

4. B: N’ubundi ni cyo abapadiri baberaho hano mu burayi.  
‘that’s exactly the role of priests here in Europe’

As I have argued elsewhere, language choice is a “significant aspect of talk organisation” (Gafaranga, 1999). Therefore, among bilingual speakers, a repairable may arise at the level of language choice. Extract 1 and extract 5 above are good examples of this. In both cases language choice (English in extract 1 and Kinyarwanda in extract 5) is felt to be problematic and repaired. Alternatively, a repairable may be seen as having both a language choice dimension and content dimension. Here’s an example. Talk involves an adult participant (B) and a child (E).

#### Extract 10

1. B: *Alors E, washushanyije iki?*  
‘So E, what have you drawn?’
2. E: ***Quoi?***  
‘What?’
3. B: *Ça c’est quoi?*  
‘What is this?’
4. (.)
5. B: *Qu’est ce que tu as dessiné?*  
‘What have you drawn?’

In turn 1, B produces a *first pair part* (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973) using Kinyarwanda. In turn 2, E uses an open-class repair initiator and, at the same time, switches from Kinyarwanda to French. In 3, B attends to both the content and the language choice dimensions of the repair initiator. At the level of content, B produces a modified version of his initial question, moving from ‘washushanyije iki? (what

have you drawn?') to '*ça c'est quoi?* (what is this?'), as if E's difficulty has been that of understanding. At the level of language choice, he switches from his prior use of Kinyarwanda to French. Interestingly, when no second pair part is produced after this ambivalent repair (pause in 4), B re-analyses the repairable as only having a language choice dimension and translates his original first pair part into French.

#### *Language alternation and/in repair initiation*

The second component of a repair sequence is the repair initiator. At this level, a distinction is made between *self-initiation* and *other-initiation*. In turn, in self-initiation of repair, speakers use a variety of "non-lexical speech perturbations" such as cut-offs and voicings such as er and hm (Schegloff et al, 1977: 367). As these non-verbal devices are not language specific, they can be found both in monolingual and in bilingual conversation. Therefore, they are inconsequential for the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair.

A more interesting observation regarding self-initiation of repair is that it need not result in self-repair. Current speaker may notice / anticipate a problem, but fail to find the repairer. In this case, other-repair may be produced (Schegloff et al., 1977: 364). In extract 4 above, A initiates repair, but the repairer is produced by B and C in overlapping turns. Given the fact that any aspect of talk organisation is potentially repairable, this possibility of other-repair after self-initiation raises a practical problem. How does next speaker know exactly which aspect of the talk first speaker wanted to repair? As I have indicated above, this is the exact opposite of a related problem Sidnell (2010) refers to as *the other-initiated repair problem*. Paraphrasing this, we can speak of a *self-initiated other-repair problem*. A recurrent strategy

speakers use to overcome this practical difficulty is for current speaker to give clues as to what the repairable is. In extract 4, for example, the item 'kitagize' ('which was') clues interlocutors to the fact that current speaker is trying to qualify the kind of Kinyarwanda which was being promoted. In extract 11 (turn 7) and extract 12 (turn 5) below, current speaker formulates the difficulty they are having ('what do you call it again?' in extract 11 and 'I can't pronounce it' in extract 12) and goes on to attempt to do exactly what they have declared themselves unable to do. Such attempts clue next speaker to what exactly it is that first speaker is having problems with.

#### Extract 11

1. P: So this isn't er likely to be on my side this isn't likely to be something arthritic or [something like that?
2. D: [No. Definitely not.
3. P: A simple-
4. D: Yeah
5. P: Yes.
6. D: Definitely not.
7. P: What did you call it again? **Aplanta-**?
8. D: Faschiitis
9. P: Oh right

#### Extract 12

1. P: I've been- I've sucked for England on Lozenges.
2. D: ((laughs))
3. P: And I've [been-
4. D: [Which ones?
5. P: Er oh I can't pronounce it. **Dia-** the pharmacist recommended them last week. **Dia- Diaquist Quest-**
6. D: Dequa- Dequacain?
7. P: Something like that. They're orange.

Among bilingual speakers, as extract 2 and extract 3 show, language alternation can be used as a resource in attending to this practical problem of cluing interlocutors to the repairable. A third example of this practice can be found in extract 13 below.

Participants have adopted Kinyarwanda-French language alternation as the medium. In the course of his talk, A comes across a problem of the *mot juste* for what he wants to say. After many unsuccessful attempts, he seeks co-participant's support and uses German (Sozialamt) by way of indicating exactly what it is that he is having problems with. In turn 2, B attempts other-repair, which unfortunately is not accepted as appropriate (turn 3).

### Extract 13

1. A: kwenregistra umwan n'ibiki (.) byose kugirango *donc* (.) abone amafaranga- *donc* kugiranga (unclear) (.) *bon* (laughter) njya muri ntuza- muri za *ministères*- murii (.) Sozialamt (.) *donc* ni kimwe- 'registering the child and so on (.) all that so (.) she receives the money (.) well so that (unclear) so I went to something- to the ministry departments (.) to the (.) Social welfare office (.) well it's like-'
2. B: *ministères des affaires sociales*  
'Ministry of Social Affairs'
3. A: oya (.) ni *service en fait* ntabwo ari *ministère*  
'no (.) in fact it's an office it's not a ministry'

We have seen above that, at the level of repair initiation, a distinction must be made between self-initiation and other-initiation. In turn, other-initiation takes many forms, including *open class repair initiators*, *class specific question words*, *repetition with or without question words*, and *understanding checks* (Schegloff et al, 1977: 367-369). Among bilingual speakers, language alternation may co-occur with each of these. To start with the first form, Drew (1997: 71) defines an open class repair initiator as one which "does not locate specifically what it is in the prior turn that the speaker is having trouble with hearing or understanding". An open class repair initiator "does not locate a specific repairable in the prior turn". When an open repair initiator is used a "speaker indicates that he/she has some difficulty with the other's prior turn, but without locating specifically where or what that difficulty is". Usually

open class repair initiators are interpreted as indicating a general problem of understanding/hearing. Extract 7 above is a good case in point. In turn 1, C utters a first pair part. In turn 10, E provides a second pair part, in 11, C uses ‘umh?’. E interprets this as indicating a lack of hearing and restates the second pair part (turn 12).

Among bilingual speakers, verbal open class repair initiators can co-occur with language alternation as illustrated in extract 10 above. A second example of this practice is extract 14 below.

#### Extract 14

1. B: Uzaza kunsura ryari?  
‘When are you coming to visit me?’
2. D: *Quoi?*  
‘What?’
3. B: Uzaza kunsura ryari?  
‘When are you coming to visit me?’
4. D: *Je ne sais pas.*  
‘I don’t know.’
5. B: Urabizi sha.  
‘You do know, come on’

The difference between extract 10 and extract 14 is worth noting. In extract 10 as we have seen, the repair initiator was initially interpreted as ambivalent, i.e. as having a language choice dimension and a content dimension and then negotiated only to have a language choice dimension. In extract 14, on the other hand, B has interpreted the

repair initiator as only indicating a lack of hearing/understanding. Indeed, following the initiator, he restates his first pair part in the same language.

Unlike open class repair initiators, class specific question words point to specific items in prior talk as the repairables. Consider extract 15 below. Talk takes place during a GP consultation. P has been presenting with chest and belly pains. The doctor suspects that these pains are due to P's heavy drinking habits. We join the consultation in the closing phase, when D is handing over the prescription and giving advice on appropriate behaviour. In 3, P disagrees with D's advice saying that 'everybody' drinks as heavily as he does and yet they do not experience the same symptoms. In (4), D challenges this position using a conversational repair strategy. He uses the class specific question word 'who?', thereby indicating that the extreme formulator 'everybody' is the repairable. In turn 5, P produces the repair, dropping 'everybody' in favour of 'some people'.

#### Extract 15

1. D: ((tears off and signs prescription)) But er as I say I think the most important thing is to cut down your drinking. You shouldn't really drink more than about ten pints a week? Maximum?
2. (.)
3. P: (yeah but) I mean everybody does that don't they. They they don't-
4. D: **Who?**
5. P: Most people do that in one night (.) (of drinking). But they (.) don't have problems. Well not that I know of anyway.
6. D: Well some people can get away with it but other people can't (.) Anyway try those and er if it's not getting any better come back and see me again.

Extract 16 below, on the other hand, was recorded in a bilingual Rwandan family in Belgium. A mother (A) instructs her daughter (C) to count so as to display her fluency in Kinyarwanda. However, the mother does not specify in which language



the child should count. As a result, C initiates repair using a specific question designed to elicit the name of a specific language. At the same time, she switches from Kinyarwanda (as used by the mother in turn 1) to French. In turn 3, the mother effects repair, indicating the specific language (Kinyarwanda).

#### Extract 16

1. A: C, ngaho nawe bara turebe.  
'C, show us how you can count'
2. C: ***En quoi?***  
'*In which (language)?*'
3. A: *En kinyarwanda.*  
'*In Kinyarwanda.*'
4. C : (inaudible)

The third strategy for other-initiated repair is repetition with or without question word. An example of this strategy can be found in extracts 17 below. Talk takes place in a Rwandan family in Belgium. Visitor B is amazed at child C's sport skills (talk not shown) and asks him who taught him to do sports. In turn 2, C provides a second pair part. In turn 3, B initiates repair, using repetition, by way of opening a *non-minimal post expansion sequence* (Schegloff, 2007).

#### Extract 17

1. B: Ni nde wakwigishije?  
'Who taught you to do it?'
2. C: *Moi toute seule.*  
'(I learned) *all by myself*'
3. B: ***Toute seule?***  
'(you learned) *all by yourself?*'

4. C: *Les copines qui m'ont montrée.*  
'Some friends showed me (how to do it).'

Among bilingual speakers, repetition may involve language alternation as in extracts 18 and 19 below.

Extract 18

1. B: E, mubyinire gato arebe (.) bimwe bya *un deux trois* chu chu chu – bya bindi byaa- **mwakoze kugeza kuri onze.**  
'Dance a bit for him to see (.) the one you go *one two three* chu chu chu- the one you- you did up to *eleven.*'
2. E: ***Que j'ai fait jusqu'à onze?***  
*'The one I did up to eleven?'*
3. B: Ubare kugeza kuri *onze* (.) ya nkoni yawe iri hariya genda uyizane kugirango ubare kugeza kuri *onze.*  
'You count up to eleven (.) Your stick is there go and get it so you can count up to *eleven.*'

Extract 19

1. E: *Je lui ai posé toutes les questions que j'avais*  
'I have asked him all the questions I had'
2. A: **Byose?**  
'All of them?'
3. E: *Oui*  
'Yes'

Note that, in this strategy as in all the others, language alternation itself may, but need not, be oriented to as the repairable. In the examples above, language alternation is not oriented to as repairable as evidenced by the fact that, in turn 3, first speaker maintains their language choice as in turn 1. In extract 20 below, on the other hand, language alternation itself is the repairable as evinced by the fact that, in turn 3,

the only action A undertakes following C's repair initiation is to switch from Kinyarwanda to French.

Extract 20

1. A: Uzi kubara?  
'Do you know how to count?'
2. C: ***Je sais compter?***  
'Do I know how to count?'
3. A: *Tu sais compter?*  
'Do you know how to count?'
4. C: *Oui.*  
'Yes.'
5. E: *Jusqu' à combien?*  
'Up to how much?'

The last strategy for other-initiation of repair is to propose a "possible understanding of prior turn" (Schegloff et al, 1977: 368). An example of this strategy in monolingual talk is extract 21 below. In 2, P produces a turn to the effect that somebody goes with her to see Dr A, in response to D's question in turn 1. As no specific person is identified, repair is relevant. One way this could have been done is by means of the class specific question word 'who?'. Instead, D proposes a candidate understanding ('one of your family?') and calls on P to confirm it.

Extract 21

1. D: Does anybody ever go with you when you go and see Dr A?
2. P: [Yes
3. D: [**One of your family?**
4. P: No. Not my family but a friend of mine Mrs H if you know her.

An example of this strategy in bilingual conversation can be found in extract 22. Talk takes place in a bilingual Rwandan family in Belgium. B, the visitor, asks C, a child, how many friends he has. As, in 2, B produces what appears to be an irrelevant second pair part, A, the mother, steps in to clarify the first pair part. C encounters a problem in following A's talk and calls for repair, suggesting a candidate solution. The actual problem has to do with the word 'umubare' (number). Using French, C puts forth what he considers this term to mean (*soeur*) and calls for A's confirmation. In so doing, he switches from Kinyarwanda to French. Unfortunately, as revealed in turn 5, A does not confirm C's proposed understanding.

#### Extract 22

1. B: Ufite inshuti zingahe?  
'How many friends do you have?'
2. C: *Au Rwanda j'ai aussi des amis.*  
*'I have friends in Rwanda too.'*
3. A: Yakubajije hano- mu Rwanda ntaho yakubajije- mu Rwanda ntabo uzi.  
Atangiye kwibagirwa kubera *vacances*. Yakubajije **umubare w'inshuti zawe.**  
'He asked you about here- he didn't ask you about Rwanda- You do not know anybody in Rwanda. He is starting to forget because of the *holidays*. He asked you the number of your friends.'
4. C: ***La soeur?***  
*'The sister?'*
5. A: Umubare.  
'The number.'

#### *Language alternation and / in the repairer*

The third element in a repair sequence is the repairer. With respect to this element, two related questions are asked. Who produces it, i.e. who effects repair, and where does the repairer appear relative to the trouble source? With respect to the first

of the two questions, a distinction must be made between *self-repair* and *other-repair*. In terms of position relative to the trouble source, three different positions are possible for self-repair and one for other-repair, except if repair has been delayed (Schegloff, 2000). For self-repair, the possible positions are: within the same turn constructional unit as the trouble source (*same turn repair*), in the next TCU after the one containing the trouble source (*transition space repair*) and in the third turn after the one containing the trouble source (*third position repair*). An example of same turn repair involving no language alternation can be found in extract 6 above, reproduced below as extract 23 for convenience.

#### Extract 23

A:       Ikikwereka ukunta ari ntuza- ari – badakunda abanyamahanga iwabo  
 (.) baraza bakakubaza (.) uri kwiga iki ah ngo *c'est pour aller*  
*travailler dans ton pays* ((laughter))

-----  
 A:       What shows you that they are something- they are- they don't like  
 foreigners (.) they come and ask you (.) what are you studying *is it to*  
*go and work in your country?* ((laughter))

As we have seen, in the extract, A had projected a SVC construction with the verb 'ari' (is). Missing the adjective to complete the SVC structure and therefore the TCU, he aborts the projected construction and resumes the TCU with an SVO construction.

Among bilingual speakers, same turn repair involving language alternation is very common. Here is an example. In this piece of talk, a word search problem arises (see elongation in 'wakoraaa') and the speaker solves it by switching from Kinyarwanda to French, thus completing the TCU in two languages.

#### Extract 24

1. C : Naho iNairobi se wakoraaa – *sur quelle base ?*  
'As for Nairobi *how* can you work ?'

As for transition space repair, two instances can be found in extract 25 below.

In turn 1, P produces a complete TCU (I'm sick all the time) and then repairs an element within it ('I'm') replacing it by another ('Feeling') in a new TCU. Likewise, in turn 2, D produces a complete TCU ('Is there any pattern to it?') and then abandons it in favour of another ('Does anything make it worse or better?'). Note that, in turn 3, P orients to the latter TCU as the valid one.

#### Extract 25

1. P: F- **I'm sick all the time. Feeling sick all the time now**  
(...)
2. D: **Is there any pattern to it? Does anything make it worse or better?**
3. P: When I eat. Makes it worse
4. D: Makes it worse.

Among bilingual speakers, language alternation can be involved in both types of transition space repair. For example, extract 1 is a case where an element within a first TCU is repaired in another TCU and using a different language. In extract 4, on the other hand, a whole TCU is replaced by a new one in a different language.

Another example of the second possibility is extract 26 below. In turn 1, B asks D how he feels when he speaks Kinyarwanda, first in Kinyarwanda and then in French.

#### Extract 26

1. B: **Ikinyarwanda iyo ukivugaa (.) wumva- wumva bimeze gute?**  
*Comment te sens tu quand tu parles le kinyarwanda?*  
'When you speak Kinyarwanda (.) how do you feel? *How do you feel when you speak Kinyarwanda?*'
2. D: *Moi je ne parle pas souvent.*  
'I do not speak it that often'

Finally, examples of third position repair can be found in extract 14, 15 and 16. In all three cases, as we have seen, other-repair initiation is used in position two, leading first speaker to self-repair in position three. Also note that, in extract 14, unlike in extracts 15 and 16, the repairer involves language alternation as the repair initiator and the repairer have used different languages.

As I have said above, a distinction is made between self-repair and other repair. While three positions are available for self-repair (see above), one is normatively available for other-repair, namely second position (except if repair has been delayed and occurs in the fourth position) (Schegloff, 2000). In the following, I only consider second position repair, the standard format. In second position repair, a distinction is made between *self-initiated other-repair* and *other-initiated other-repair*. Many of the examples we have examined consist of self-initiated other-repair, e.g. extracts 11 and 12 in monolingual talk and extracts 2, 3, 4 and 13 in bilingual conversation. In each of these, except extract 2, language alternation is involved in the repairer either in full as in 4 or in part as in 3 and 13. Finally, in all three cases, language alternation is seen as a resource for it allows speakers to express meanings they were unable to express in the other language.

As for other-initiated other-repair, a distinction is made between *exposed correction* and *embedded correction* (Jefferson, 1987). A main feature of exposed correction is that, uninvited, it interrupts the flow of the ongoing activity. Extract 9 shows a case of exposed correction which does not involve language alternation. Similar cases, with the only difference being that, this time, language alternation occurs in the repairer are extract 27 and extract 28 below.

#### Extract 27

1. A: ni mukuru (.) agako- agatourna uko ashaka  
'He's mature (.) runs it (printer) as he wants'
2. B: *à son rythme*  
'on his own pace'
3. A: *à son rythme*  
'on his own pace'
4. B: ((laughter))

#### Extract 28

1. A: (...) ariko kenshi biterwa n'ukuntu (.) na mwarimu wawe  
'often it depends on (.) on your teacher'
2. B: *directeur*  
'supervisor'
3. A: eh *ton directeur* (.) *ton direct-* iyo ari umudirecteur w'umugome  
ushobara no kumara imyaka itanu (...)  
'yes *your supervisor* (.) *your superv-* if your *supervisor* is a cruel  
person you can even spend five years (...)'

Embedded correction contrasts sharply with exposed correction in the sense that the repairer is integrated in the on-going activity. Take extract 29 below. P is consulting about what she thinks are flea bites. During the verbal examination, P confirms that she owns a cat. In turn 1, the doctor misidentifies the cat as a female one. And, in the immediately following turn, P repairs the problem. Note that, in this case, the on-going activity is not interrupted as the repair comes within a relevant second pair part in an *adjacency pair sequence* (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973).

#### Extract 29

1. D: you've got a cat. Have you de-[fleaed **her**?
2. P: [Yeah. Keep on defleaing **him**



3. D: Yes. Sorry. Beg his pardon. What about the bedding?

In bilingual conversation, such embedded corrections may involve language alternation as extract 30 shows. Talk takes place in a family. Participants have been talking about C's birthday and he says that he had a nice birthday cake. B assumes that the cake was homemade and wants to know who made it in a first pair part. B produces a second pair part which attends to the point of the question (on - we) and at the same time repairs the assumption that the cake was homemade by saying that it was actually bought. In addition to doing all this, he also switches from Kinyarwanda to French.

Extract 30

1. B: Ni nde wayiteguye?  
'Who prepared it?'
2. C: *On l'a acheté.*  
'We bought it.'
3. B: Mama yaguhaye *cadeau*?  
'Did your mum give you *a present*?'
4. C: *Non* (...)  
'No'

This notion of embedded correction is particularly important at the level of language choice. As we have seen, language choice itself may be the repairable. As a consequence, speakers may choose to repair it in an embedded fashion as in extract 31 below (extract 17 expanded). In turn 1, B asks C whether he knows how to do sports using Kinyarwanda. In turn 2, C provides a relevant second pair part, but using French. In turn 6, B asks C who taught him how to do sports, once again using Kinyarwanda. In turn 7, C provides a relevant second pair part, but once again in French. In 8, B initiates a post-expansion and, interestingly, he too uses French. That

is, the choice of Kinyarwanda by B is repaired in a way that does not disrupt the flow of talk. It is for this reason that, elsewhere, I have used the term *embedded medium repair* (Gafaranga, 2010) to describe cases like this.

Extract 31

1. B: Uzi gukora *sports* burya?  
'So you know how to do *sports*?'
2. C: *Oui*  
'Yes'
- (...)
6. B: Ni nde wakwigishije?  
'Who taught you to do it?'
7. C: *Moi toute seule.*  
'(I learned) *all by myself*'
8. B: *Toute seule?*  
'(you learned) *all by yourself*?'
9. C: *Les copines qui m'ont montrée.*  
'*Some friends showed me (how to do it).*'

Here is another example from a different context. Talk takes place at a reception desk in a hospital in Barcelona. After the exchange of greetings (in Catalan), Pa normatively tables her service request, using Catalan. In turn 4, NU opens a *pre-second insertion sequence* (Schegloff, 2007) at the end of which the service is granted in turn 7. That is to say, the service encounter is accomplished normally without any disruption. However, in turn 4, in opening the insertion sequence, NU also switches from the prior use of Catalan to Castilian. From this point onward, Castilian is adopted by both participants as the medium. That is to say, repair at the level of language choice takes place in a way that does not disrupt whatever else participants are doing.

Extract 32 (Torras, 1998, Catalan, **Castilian**)

1. Pa: bon dia (good morning)

2. Nu: bon dia (good morning)  
 3. Pa: venia a buscar medicines pel doctor C  
 (I've come to get some medicines prescribed by doctor C)  
 4. NU: **hasta cuándo la llega la medicación?**  
 (when does you medication run out?)  
 5. Pa: **tengo hasta mañana (.) pero como ya pasa mañana ya es sábado**  
 (I've got enough until tomorrow (.) but since the day after tomorrow is  
 already Saturday  
 6. Nu: **Ya** (sure)  
 7. Nu: **le dare par ahoy porqué mañana la enfermera hacen fiesta (.) entonces**  
**(.) mejor pa'hoy**  
 (I'll arrange (an appointment) for today because tomorrow the nurse is off (.)  
 so (.) better for today)

This possibility of embedded correction at the level of language choice forces a re-analysis of language alternation in other-initiation of repair. According to Jefferson (1987), correction, either exposed or embedded, has the following structure:

Turn 1: X  
 Turn 2: Y  
 Turn 3: Y

Obviously, if repair has not been successful, turn 3 may take the form X. This same structure can be applied to language choice in each of the examples where language alternation has been observed in other-initiation of repair. More specifically, each of the examples fits the pattern below, where X and Y stand for languages

Turn 1: X  
 Turn 2: Y  
 Turn 3: X/Y

That is to say, instead of viewing language alternation as merely co-occurring with other levels of repair organisation, it must be viewed as forming a repair sequence in its own right, a sequence in which language choice in position two functions as a repairer. In turn, this repair process must be seen as an embedded one in the sense that language alternation does not interrupt the on-going activity. That is to say, repair at the level of language choice is accomplished in addition to whatever else participants are doing. More specifically, it is accomplished in addition to whatever other repair

action is going on (be it initiation of repair by means of an open-repair initiator, by means of specific class question word, by means of repetition, etc.)

### *Language alternation and / in repair ratification*

In the structure for correction as proposed by Jefferson (1987) (see above), ratification corresponds to the third position. Examples where the structure applies perfectly well are extracts 9, 27 and 28. However, at least three points need to be noted with respect to the structure as proposed by Jefferson. First, the structure is not limited to the specific case of correction. Rather, it can be generalised to all cases of second position repair with little modification. In extract 5, for example, the item ‘umh’ in turn 4 functions as a ratification even though the repair is self-initiated and therefore cannot be a case of correction. Even more explicit are extracts 2 and 3 where the repairer is repeated in position three even though repair is not other-initiated. Secondly, in ratification, first speaker need not reproduce “the alternative Y”. Extract 5 is again a good example of a situation where repair is ratified without the alternative element being reproduced. Thirdly, Jefferson’s structure implies that repair has been successful. However, as Schegloff et al. (1977: 363-364) note, not every case of repair is successful. In extract 13, for example, repair is not successful since the repairer is rejected, rejection taking place at that very position where ratification was relevant. Therefore it seems more appropriate to speak of a ratification slot, rather than of ratification as such.

Further evidence of the need to speak of a ratification slot can be found in situations such as extract 33 below. In the extract, the patient is talking her aversion to medicines into being (see Britten et al., 2004). The strategy she uses here is quite

interesting. In turn 1, she implicates that she is feeling better ('I haven't got any swellings or anything') because she has stopped taking her medicines and asks the doctor to confirm this ('I can't understand'). For a couple of turns, participants work out exactly which medicines she has stopped taking. In turn 5, she uses a general reference ('other pill') and, in 6, D produces an exposed correction ('Salazopyrin'). Therefore, ratification is relevant. However, P is not in a position to ratify the repair and uses the slot in turn 7 to provide an account for the absence of ratification ('I don't know').

### Extract 33

1. P: Erm ((clears throat)) Perhaps I shouldn't ((laughs)) say this but since I haven't been on the pills I haven't got any swellings or anything. I can't understand.
2. D: Is that not since you've been- oh you haven't [been on the Methotrexate at all [yet have you
3. P: [That's since  
[since I No I-
4. D: [since you stopped the Voltarol?
5. P: [I haven't- Mm. And the other pill as well.
6. D: Oh the Salazopyrin
7. P: **Is it. I don't know**
8. D: Yeah
9. P: ((laughs))
10. D: I don't think we can blame ((laughs)) the tablets for causing the illnesses.

The issue which arises is whether, in bilingual conversation, language alternation can occur in the ratification slot. The structure as proposed by Jefferson and indeed the data we have examined suggest that, if repair has been successful, language alternation in the ratification slot is impossible. This would appear to be the case particularly if ratification consists of repetition. In the case repair has not been successful, would language alternation be possible? In the lack of appropriate data, I'm not in a position to provide a general answer to this question. However, in the

specific situation when language choice itself is the repairable, there is plenty of evidence that, when repair has failed, language alternation occurs in the ratification slot. As we have seen above, repair at the level of language choice is often done in an embedded fashion. When repair is successful, first speaker abandons their original choice and accommodates to next speaker's choice, thus realising a perfect X – Y- Y structure (see above for examples of this). However, when the proposed repairer (Y) in position two is rejected, first speaker maintains their original choice (X), and this realises the structure X- Y- X. In this case, language alternation occurs at the level of the ratification slot. That is, the absence of Y in position three is evidence that repair has failed. Examples where the X-Y-X structure is observed, i.e. examples in which language alternation occurs at the level of the ratification slot, include extracts 14, 18, 19, 30 and 31 above.

To summarise, close observation of the data shows that, in bilingual conversation, language alternation and conversational repair are intimately intertwined. Language alternation can occur at any point in repair organisation. The next issue therefore is whether this relationship between language alternation and the organisation of conversational repair is random or whether a functional explanation can be found for it. That is to say, the issue is: what does language alternation do in repair sequences when it occurs? It is to this question that I now turn.

## **V. Discussion: The functionality of language alternation in repair sequences**

In section three, we have seen that, basing on the view that language alternation can serve a discourse-related function (Auer, 1984b), scholars agree that language alternation in repair sequences serves such a function. What was not clear is

how it gets to do it and how this functionality can be conceptualised. The data examined in this paper suggest that, in order to understand the functionality of language alternation in repair sequences, it is important to keep in mind that any aspect of talk organisation can be the focus of repair (Schegloff et al, 1977: 363). Thus, in approaching an instance of language alternation in a repair sequence, the question to ask is: is language choice itself the focus of this repair or is repair addressed to some other aspect of talk organisation? In turn, the question is presumed on the view expressed by Auer (1998) that language choice can be seen as an “autonomous” level of conversational structure in bilingual speech, and more specifically on the view that language choice itself is “a significant aspect of talk organisation” (Gafaranga, 1999). In the case of an affirmative answer to the question above, the functionality of language alternation will have to be situated at the level of the medium itself. Three situations may be observed: (a) language alternation / choice itself is the repairable (e.g. extract 1, extract 10, extract 14, etc.), (b) language alternation is the repairer (same examples as above, plus extracts 20, 26, 31, etc.), and (c) language alternation indicates the failure of repair (extracts 14, 18, 19, 30 and 31). The term *medium repair* would be appropriate in this case and it is certainly in this sense that it is used in the case of *transition space medium repair* (Gafarnga, 2011).

On the other hand, in the case of a negative answer, language alternation in repair sequences must be seen as an additional resource that bilingual speakers draw on in organising their repair activities. Two situations were observed in the data I have examined: (a) language alternation may be used as a resource in solving the self-initiated other-repair problem, and (b) it can be used in the repairer (self- and other-repair), helping speakers to overcome difficulties they experience while using their

other language. The first possibility can occur whether a bilingual or a monolingual medium has been adopted (e.g. extract 2, extract 3 and extract 13) while the latter can only occur when a bilingual medium has been adopted (e.g. extract 4, extract 24 and extract 27). In order to capture this difference, the term *medium repair* was used in the first case and *other-language repair* was used for the second (Gafaranga, 2000).

Given the understanding I have developed in this paper, the concept of *other-language repair* retains its integrity while that of *medium repair* turns out to be less satisfactory. A more appropriate concept would appear to be *other-language repair initiation*.

The view of the functionality of language alternation in repair sequences proposed here has implications for some of the research reported in section three of this paper. In that section, it was pointed out that it was not clear whether authors, when they mention language alternation in repair sequences, actually refer to the same phenomenon. Based on the view of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair developed in this paper, it is possible to predict, tentatively at least, a certain specialisation of jobs between the two categories of language alternation in repair sequences. To start with, I can say with certainty that projects which use language alternation in repair sequences as a proof procedure (group three above) have been based on those cases where language alternation is used as a resource (medium repair vs. other-language repair). Likewise, it is relatively certain that, for projects aimed at documenting language shift, relevant data will most likely consist of instances where language choice itself is the focus of repair. This is certainly the case in Gafaranga (2010) and Gafaranga (2011). As for the investigation of general issues such as the contribution of language alternation to talk organisation



(e.g. Shin and Milroy, 2000), either or both types can be used. However, even here, when a specific issue is pursued, only one of the two types may be relevant. For example, to investigate the question of whether language alternation in repair sequences is directional or not (Alfonzetti, 1998), relevant data would most likely consist of instances where language alternation is used as an additional resource. It is because of this high likelihood of the job specialisation of language alternation in repair sequences that a general account, serving as a point of reference for specific project, is relevant.

## **VI. Summary and conclusion**

Researchers have often made reference to language alternation in conversational repair in bilingual conversation. However, such reports amount to what, in this paper, I have called ‘noticings’ because they do not seriously engage the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair. As a result, I felt that, despite these reports, a general description of that relationship was needed. Such a general account was felt to be necessary because, working as a point of reference, it would, among other things, help settle the issue of whether researchers, when they mention language alternation in repair sequences, are actually referring the same or different phenomena. It is such an account that this paper has developed, focusing on two specific questions: (a) where in repair organisation can language alternation occur? and (b) what does language alternation do when it occurs in repair sequences?

Regarding the first question, observation of the data revealed that, in bilingual conversation, language alternation and conversational repair are closely intertwined. None of the major components of repair, as a conversational organisation, is, in

principle, incompatible with language alternation. Language alternation can occur at the level of the repairable, it can occur at the level of repair initiation in its various forms, it can occur at the level of the repairer and it can even surface at the level of repair ratification. Regarding the functionality of language alternation in repair sequences, it was observed that a distinction must be made between cases where language choice itself is the focus of the repair process and cases where language alternation is only used as an additional resource for the organisation of repair. In turn, this understanding of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair was felt to have implications for the use of language alternation in repair sequences in various research agenda. Some research agenda may require to look at instances where language choice itself is the focus of repair, others may require to look at cases where language alternation is an additional resource for the organisation of repair and others still may be indifferent to this distinction.

A word on the limitations of the research conducted for this paper is in order by way of a conclusion. As indicated in section two, this paper has been based on a corpus of naturally occurring conversations collected in the same community, that of the Rwandan immigrants in Belgium. While conversational organisations are sui-generis and cohort-independent, it is also well known that conversation is context-shaped (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1978) and Drew and Heritage (1992)). The Rwandan community in Belgium is specific, among other things, in that it is an immigrant community whose members were bilingual in the current majority language (French) even before immigration and is currently undergoing language shift. Not every bilingual community fits this description. Therefore, the community might have marked its “finger print” (Drew and Heritage, 1992) on the relationship

between language alternation and conversational repair as I have described it in this paper. In order to sieve out this potential “finger print” and retain the ideal, context-independent representation of the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair, the actual “machinery” (Sacks et al., 1978), replication studies of the present one, investigating the relationship between language alternation and conversational repair in other sociolinguistic settings, are called for. I hope that, in this paper, I have made available a backdrop against which such replication studies can be undertaken.

---

<sup>i</sup> Transcription conventions

The kind of analysis undertaken here does not require a very sophisticated transcription of the data. As a result, a very simplified system, based on Jefferson (1984), has been adopted:

- a. Open square bracket ([]): onset of overlap
- b. Dash (-) : cut-off
- c. Question mark (?): rising intonation usually corresponding to a question
- e. Full stop (.): falling intonation
- f. Double closed round brackets ((laughs)): non-verbal action named in brackets
- g. Single closed round brackets (yeah but): unclear, with the transcriber’s best guess included in the brackets
- h. A point within single closed round brackets (.): Perceptible pause
- i. Three points within closed single round brackets (...): talk omitted / talk continues
- j. multiple vowels (wakoraaa): elongation
- k. **Bold**: target element
- l. Turns numbered for easy reference
- m. Participants anonymised using alphabet letters for Kinyarwanda-French data and D and P for Doctor and patient respectively for consultation data
- n. Translation into English provided after each turn with (x) indicating a word or phrase added in the translation to facilitate intelligibility.
- o. Language contrast in Kinyarwanda-French data:
  - Plain font: Kinyarwanda
  - Italics*: French
  - Underlined: other languages

<sup>ii</sup> The first data set was collected in the context of my PhD (Gafaranga, 1998) and the second was collected as part of an ESRC-funded project on language shift and maintenance in the Rwandan community in Belgium (res-000-22-1165)

<sup>iii</sup> I’ve had the privilege to be given access to this data set as part of a lectureship funded by Sir Siegmund Warburg’s Voluntary Settlement in the KGT School of Medicine (King’s College London). The grant holders (N. Britten, F. Stevenson, J. Barry, and C. Bradley) are acknowledged.

## References

- Al-Yaqout, N. (2010). Code-switching and language choice: Generational differences in Kuwait. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Newcastle.
- Auer, P. (1984a). On the meaning of conversational code-switching. In J.P. Auer and A. di Luzio (eds.), *Interpretive sociolinguistics*. Tübingen, Germany: Narr, 87-112.

- 
- Auer, P. (1984b). *Bilingual conversation*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Auer, P. (1988). A conversation analytic approach to code-switching and transfer. In M. Heller (ed.), *Codeswitching*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 187-214.
- Auer, P. (1995). The pragmatics of code-switching: A sequential approach. In L. Milroy and P. Muysken (eds.), *One speaker two languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 115-135.
- Auer, P. (1998). Introduction: *Bilingual conversation* revisited. In *Code-switching in conversation*. London: Routledge, 1-24.
- Auer, P. (2000). Why should we and how can we determine the 'base language' of a bilingual conversation. *Estudios de Sociolingüística*, 1, 129-144.
- Alfonzetti, G (1998). The conversational dimension in code-switching between Italian and dialect Sicily. In P. Auer (ed.), *Code-switching in conversation*. London: Routledge, 180-211.
- Bani-Shoraka, H. (2009). Cross-generational bilingual strategies among Azerbaijanis in Teheran. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 198, 105-127.
- Blom, J. B. and Gumperz, J. (1972). Social meaning in linguistic structure: Code-switching in Norway. In J. Gumperz and D. Hymes (eds.), *Directions in sociolinguistics*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 407-436.
- Bonacina, F. (2011). A conversation analytic approach to practiced language policies: The example of an induction classroom for newly arrived immigrant children in France. Unpublished PhD thesis, The University of Edinburgh.
- Bonacina, F and Gafaranga, J. (2011). 'Medium of instruction' vs. 'medium of classroom interaction': Language choice in a French complementary school classroom in Scotland. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 4, 319-334.
- Britten, N., Stevenson, F. A., Gafaranga, J., Barry, C., and Bradley, C. (2004). The expression of aversion to medicines in general practice consultations. *Social Science and Medicine*, 59, 1495-503.
- Cashman, H. R. (2007). Conversation and interaction analysis. In L. Wei and M. G. Moyer (eds.), *The Blackwell guide to research methods in bilingualism and multilingualism*. Oxford: Blackwell, 275-295.
- Drew, P. (1997). "Open" class repair initiators in response to sequential sources of troubles in conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 28, 69-101.
- Drew, P. and Heritage, J. (1992). Introduction. In *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 3-65.
- Egbert, M. (1997). Some interactional achievements of other-initiated repair in multiperson interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 27, 611-634.
- Gafaranga, J. (1998). Elements of order in bilingual talk: Kinyarwanda-French language alternation. Unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University.
- Gafaranga, J. (1999). Language choice as a significant aspect of talk organisation. *Text: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of Discourse*, 19, 201-226.
- Gafaranga, J. (2000). Medium repair versus other-language repair: Telling the medium of a bilingual conversation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 4, 65-84.
- Gafaranga, J. (2001). Linguistic identities in talk-in-interaction: Order in bilingual conversation. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33, 1901-1925.
- Gafaranga, J. (2007). *Talk in two languages*. Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave.
- Gafaranga, J. (2009). The conversation analytic approach to code-switching. In B. E. Bullock and A. J. Toribia (eds.), *The Cambridge handbook of linguistic code-switching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 114-126.
- Gafaranga, J. (2010). Medium request: Talking language shift into being. *Language in Society*, 39, 241-270.
- Gafaranga, J. (2011). Transition space medium repair: Language choice talked into being. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43, 118-135.
- Gafaranga, J. and Torras, M. C. (2001). Language versus medium in the study of bilingual conversation. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 6, 1-22.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Discourse strategies*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Heritage, J. (1988). Explanations as accounts: A conversation analytic perspective. In C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing everyday explanation: A casebook of methods*. London: Sage publications, 126-144.
- Heritage, J. and Watson, R. (1979). Formulations as conversational objects. In G. Psathas (ed.), *Everyday language: Studies in Ethnomethodology*. New York: Irvington, 123-162.

- 
- Heritage, J. and Sefi, S. (1992). Dilemmas of advice: Aspects of the delivery and reception of advice in interactions between health visitors and first-time mothers. In P. Drew and J. Heritage (eds.), *Talk at work*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 359-417
- Ihemere, K. (2007). *A tri-generational study of language choice and shift in Port Harcourt*. Boca Raton, Florida: Universal Publishers.
- Jefferson, G. (1987). Exposed and embedded corrections. In G. Button and J. R. E. Lee (eds.), *Talk and social organization*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 86-100.
- Kulick, D. (1992). *Language shift and cultural reproduction: Socialization, self and syncretism in a Papua New Guinea village*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Liddicoat, A. J. (2007). *An introduction to conversation analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Milroy, L. and Wei, L. (1995). A social network approach to code-switching: The example of a bilingual community in Britain. In L. Milroy and P. Muysken (eds.), *One speaker two languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 136-157.
- Muysken, P. (2000). *Bilingual speech: A typology of code-mixing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Paraskeva, M. (2010). Code-switching in London Greek-Cypriots: A conversation analytic account. *Newcastle Working Papers in Linguistics (no 16)*. University of Newcastle upon Tyne.
- Paugh, A. L. (2005). Acting adult: Language socialization, shift and ideology in Dominica, West Indies. In J. Cohen, K.T. McAlister, K. Rolstad and J. MacSwan (eds.), *Proceedings of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Bilingualism*. Somerville, MA: Cascadia Press, 1807-1820.
- Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. and Jefferson, G. (1978). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking in conversation. In J. N. Schenkein (ed.), *Studies in the organization of conversational interaction*. New York: Academic Press, 7-55.
- Schegloff, E. (2000). When 'others' initiate repair. *Applied Linguistics* 21/2, 205-243.
- Schegloff, E. (2007). *Sequence organization in interaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Schegloff, E., Jefferson, G. and Sacks, H. (1977). The preference for self-correction in the organization of repair in conversation. *Language* 53, 361-382.
- Schegloff, E. and Sacks, H. (1973). Opening up closings. *Semiotica*, 8, 289-327.
- Shin, S. and Milroy, L. (2000). Conversational code-switching among Korean-English bilingual children. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 4, 351-384.
- Sidnell, J. (2010). *Conversation analysis: An introduction*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Stevenson, F. A., Britten, C. A., Barber, N. and Bradley, C. P. (2000). Research notes: Qualitative methods and prescribing research. *Journal of Clinical Pharmacy and Therapeutics*, 25, 317-324.
- Torras, M. C. (1998). Code negotiation and code alternation in service encounters in Catalonia. Unpublished MA dissertation, Lancaster University.
- Torras, M. C. (1999). Selection of medium in conversation: A study of trilingual service encounters. *Working Paper no 112*, Centre for Language in Social Life, Lancaster University.
- Torras, M. C. and Gafaranga, J. (2002). Social identities and language alternation in non-formal institutional bilingual talk: Trilingual service encounters in Barcelona. *Language in Society*, 31, 527-548.
- Wei, L. (1994). *Three generations, two languages, one family*. Clevedon, Avon: Multilingual Matters.
- Wei, Li (2005). 'How can you tell?' Towards a common sense explanation of conversational code-switching. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 37, 375-389.
- Wei, L., Milroy, L. and Pong, S. H. (1992). A two-step sociolinguistic analysis of code-switching and language choice: The example of a bilingual Chinese community in Britain. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 2, 63-86.
- Wong, J. (2000). Delayed next turn repair initiation in native/non-native speakers of English conversation. *Applied linguistics*, 21/2, 244-268.